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ABSTRACT

Community-based programming (CBP) is a process in which a community college becomes the leader in effecting collaboration among the people, their leaders, and community-based organizations and agencies in its service area to identify and seek resolution to major issues facing the community and its people. To facilitate CBP, a community college should: (1) reach consensus on a definition of CBP; (2) determine which of its programs are consistent with its working definition of CBP; (3) review its mission to determine whether it is compatible with CBP; (4) evaluate organizational operating procedures and the college's capacity to engage in CBP; (5) assess the competencies and skills of existing staff; and (6) develop and implement a strategy for equipping staff with the skills to undertake CBP, including in-house workshops to review the concept and process of CBP, and self-directed staff learning programs on CBP, utilizing available print materials, video programs, and visiting consultants and speakers. In addition, the college should establish an environmental scanning committee comprised of college personnel and community representatives; identify, rank, and legitimize community issues; identify the target public for each issue and spokespersons within the target population; develop, in conjunction with these spokespersons, plans of action for addressing the issues; develop and implement programs to carry out the plans of action; and establish evaluation procedures. (PAA)

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GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO FOLLOW IN COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

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GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO FOLLOW IN COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING[1]

Community colleges, from their inception, have been a vital force in ferreting out, responding to, and serving the educational needs of people who reside in their respective service areas (i.e., communities). Through their broad array of programs, community colleges have impacted and continue to impact positively on quality of life of their constituencies. Countless people have been helped to improve their performance, both as members of the work force and as members of society. Those individuals have been encouraged and enabled to improve their educational status, and to acquire the marketable work, technical, and interpersonal skills needed to obtain gainful employment and to advance in their chosen occupations. Their personal and professional aspirations and their resolve to achieve them have been elevated, with the result that they have become more active and informed participants in the affairs of their community, state, and nation. These improvements in the human resource base of community college service areas have helped those communities to improve and develop further their economic base through economic development programs, and to enrich human lives through improved appreciation for and availability of the cultural arts.

While community colleges have and continue to have a profound effect on improving the lives of their constituencies, there now is a critical need for these unique American institutions to become the moving force in effecting greater collaboration among the people, their leaders, and community-based organizations and agencies in identifying and seeking resolution to major and complex issues that are impacting on the people. Issues such as unemployment and underemployment, adult literacy, a polluted environment, ineffectual school systems, spiraling health care costs, a lessening quality of health care services, substance abuse, and increased tension between ethnic groups are but a few of the public issues that face every community in the nation.

Currently, no mechanism exists in communities through which to stimulate, motivate, and sustain cooperation and collaboration among the people, their leaders, and community-based agencies and organizations in collectively identifying, studying, and analyzing issues that are of critical concern to the people, and in initiating programs that will lead to their resolution. Most community organizations and agencies tend to be specialized, and thus have rather narrow and specific functions. They do, however, have resources and expertise that, if skillfully combined with those of other agencies and organizations as part of a team effort, could have a measurable impact on the resolution of community-based issues.

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[1]Community-based programming is defined as a process in which the community college becomes the leader in effecting collaboration among the people, their leaders, and community-based organizations and agencies in its service area to identify and seek resolution to major issues that are of critical concern to the community (i.e., service area) and its people.

Among the total array of current community agencies and organizations, the community college is the best equipped to function as the catalyst to facilitate cooperation and collaboration among the people and their leaders in the community. The unique strengths that equip community colleges to function in this catalyst role are (1) its multidisciplinary resource base, (2) the generally favorable perception of its capability held by the public, and (3) its sensitivity to the social, economic, and political forces in its local environment.

To facilitate and aid community colleges in their quest to help the people and their leaders in identifying and resolving community problems and issues, ACCLAIM suggests that community colleges consider the following guidelines.

I. The community college needs to reach consensus on a working definition for community-based programming.

II. Using its working definition of community-based programming, each community college should analyze its programs to determine those that are consistent with its working definition. Those programs judged to be community-based should be analyzed with regard to (1) their genesis; (2) the problem(s) being addressed; (3) the public(s) being targeted; (4) the nature and degree of the target public(s) and its leaders' involvement in defining the problems, as well as their involvement in planning and implementing programs leading to their resolution; and (5) the procedures being used to monitor and assess the impact of the planned program. The purposes of this analysis are to (1) learn about the community college's current involvement in community-based programming, (2) the returns that are being realized by the community college and its community, (3) the strengths and weaknesses associated with those programs, and (4) to use this information in a systematic manner to strengthen the community college's capability to help people and their leaders in seeking resolution to major issues.

III. To ensure that community-based programming is a major component of its programmatic thrust, the community college needs to (1) revisit its mission to determine whether or not it has the authority to engage in community-based programming; (2) examine its organization and modus operandi to determine their adequacy in providing the incentives, resources, and support for community-based programming; and (3) assess the competencies and skills of its existing staff to lead in community-based programming.

IV. To assure that its staff possesses the competencies and skills needed, the community college should develop and implement a strategy for equipping them to lead in community-based programming. Such a strategy might include but not be limited to:

A. A planned in-house workshop of 1-2 days' duration that focuses on community-based programming as both a <u>concept</u> and a <u>process</u>. Informed community-based programming experts should serve as the principal resource persons for the workshops. The content of the workshop might focus on, but not be limited to

1. Defining and reaching consensus on what constitutes community-based programming;

2. Identifying and exploring the key concepts that undergird, give meaning to, and, indeed, are integral parts of community-based programming;

3. Describing the processual tasks involved in community-based programming; and

4. Critically examining existing community-based programs and the processes used in their development, implementation, and evaluation.

B. Organizing and developing a self-directed learning program that focuses on community-based programming. Such a planned, individualized growth program would include:

1. Identifying references and print materials that focus on community-based programming;

2. Identifying videos, cassettes, and other instructional aids that describe and elaborate on community-based programming;

3. Identifying knowledgeable resource persons with whom a learner might interact or engage in dialog about community-based programming;

4. Developing a case study/simulation that requires the learner to draw upon learning resources and personal experiences in analyzing and proposing possible strategies for its resolution; and

5. Arranging for planned visits with representatives of other community-based agencies and organizations that have some semblance of community-based programs (i.e., Cooperative Extension, Public Health, environmental agencies).

V. Drawing from the literature on programming, strategic planning, and community development, the following processual tasks are suggested for community college leaders to begin considering and possibly using in their approach to initiating community-based programming.

A. The community college should examine critically and, if needed, modify its mission, philosophy, functions, organizational structure, and mode of operation (i.e., management style/processes) to incorporate and give emphasis to community-based programming as one of its major programmatic thrusts.

B. Consistent with its modified mission and modus operandi for accentuating community-based programming, the community college should establish an appropriate and functional mechanism for scanning its external environment (i.e., service area/community) to identify current and emerging issues[2] that are of critical concern to the people in the service area. Such a mechanism might be a cadre of selected community college administrators/faculty members and well-informed, visionary community leaders who are willing to function in an organized manner as an environmental scanning committee,[3] think-tank committee, brain-trust committee, or futuring panel for the institution as it embarks on community-based programming.

C. The community college CEO and his or her administrators should vigorously engage the organized group of selected community college personnel and community leaders in purposeful and directed environmental scanning of the community college's service area.

D. The community college and its organized group of leaders should seek further confirmation and legitimation of the identified and ranked issues from other community leaders and power brokers.

E. Following confirmation, legitimation, and ranking of each of the issues, the community college, with assistance from its organized community leaders' group should proceed to study, analyze, and map the publics in the service area that are or will be affected by each of the ranked issues.[4] For each issue, there exists a

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[2]An issue is defined as a matter of wide public concern that arises out of complex human problems. Issues have three key features: (1) they exist in the external environment--the broad dimensions of the entire society; (2) they have their source in complex problems--economic, social, political, technological--characterized by divergent viewpoints, shifting public perceptions, and turbulent values in an age of instability; and (3) they frequently involve conflict and controversy that require mediation of disputes and competing interests.

[3]Environmental scanning is a process that focuses on the identification, study, and analysis of current and emerging issues and forces that are impacting on people and their quality of life. Environmental scanning focuses first on surface indicators/issues that are derived from television reports, radio, newspapers, literature, periodicals, and personal observations. Trends and other data concerning these indicators then are examined and analyzed to discover more about the issues and whether they are indeed issues of critical concern to the people and warrant concerted attention. At this stage, a rank-ordering of the issues emerges according to the severity of their potential impact on the people.

[4]A public is defined as a group of people who are or will be affected by an issue. Generally, a public (1) shares common interests, characteristics, and identities; (2) manifests frequent or continuous interaction; and (3) is spatially distributed over either a small area or a larger territory.

distinct target public that is connected/linked to significant other publics. The target public is that aggregate of people that is or will be impacted directly by the issue, while the significant other publics, often referred to as stakeholders, have or may have a vested interest in what happens to the target public.

F. Once the target public and its significant other publics are identified and defined for the issue, the community college (with assistance from its organized leader group) selects and uses appropriate processes for identifying the formal and informal leaders/spokespersons within the target and significant other publics. The object is to discover those persons who can speak authoritatively for and who reflect the beliefs and values of those publics.

G. The community college (with the counsel and assistance of its organized leader group) initiates dialog with leaders and spokespersons of the issue-specified target public(s) and significant other public(s), the object being to attain consensus or general agreement that the issue is real and, indeed, is a factor that is impacting on quality of life (i.e., well-being) of the target public. Further, the dialog ideally would lead to agreement among the leaders on the need to work together (collaborate) in developing and implementing a plan that will bring about resolution or positive/forward movement toward resolving the issue. It is at this stage that the development of a coalition of the target public and significant other publics begins to emerge.

H. The community college creates the medium/setting/situation for the leaders of the coalition to become deeply involved in a thorough study and analysis of the issue and the situation within which it is embedded. The object is to learn as much about the factors/variables associated with the issue, the people affected, and the potential for possible resolution of the issue. It is out of this learning context that the issue is clarified, defined, and brought into sharper focus. Further, decisions should be taken/reached on a plan of action for resolving or moving toward resolution of the issue. Such decisions include a definition of goals to be achieved, an educational/change strategy for working toward attainment of these goals, agreement and commitment from the leaders of the coalition as to what their respective agency/organization/group will be willing to do (1) as a part of a coordinated team effort in implementing the agreed-upon plan of action; (2) in developing a plan for monitoring the implementation of the plan of action; and (3) in developing plans for continuing formative evaluations, interim summative evaluations, and the final summative evaluation.

I. The community college provides leadership for the coalition in firming the coordinated/collaborative plan of action, the schedule for implementing various aspects of the plan of action, and the actual launching of the plan. Further plans are developed and firmed on active and ongoing monitoring of the implementation of all of the activities incorporated in the plan of action. There must be mutual

agreement among the coalition leaders and community college officials to utilize the feedback obtained through the monitoring/evaluation of ongoing program activities and to make changes/alterations in the plan of action and its activities as needed to ensure maximum results in resolving the issue.

J. Throughout implementation of the plan of action, periodic and scheduled meetings of the coalition leaders, as well as other significant community leaders, are held to provide for reporting on progress being made, obstacles being encountered, and to explore other strategies, not included in the initial plan of action, for possible use in attaining greater impact in the resolution of the issue. These planned meetings provide for reporting on results obtained, as well as alterations made in activities to increase impact (i.e., formative and interim summative evaluations). The community college functions in a catalyst role in arranging for and conducting these planned meetings.

K. The community college provides leadership for the coalition in assessing the final outcome achieved through the plan of action in fully or partially resolving the issue. Further, the cost-effectiveness of the plan of action is determined at this stage.

L. Planned opportunities are arranged for coalition leaders to report to their respective constituencies/agencies/organizations, as well as other stakeholders (governance groups, elected officials, significant others) on the results obtained/progress made in resolving the issue.

M. The coalition, with the counsel and assistance of community college officials, uses the results to develop and implement new plans/strategies for continued treatment of the issue (if it still exists).

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